

Dave Mastin

State Representative
16th District

Session Report

1997

Franklin/Walla Walla/Columbia/Garfield/Asotin counties

Committees:

Agriculture and Ecology
Appropriations
Energy and Utilities

Olympia office:

404 Legislative Bldg.
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7836

District office:

13½ E. Main #211
Walla Walla, WA 99362
(509) 527-4111

Summer 1997

The most efficient session in 40 years

Dear neighbors,

The 1997 legislative session was a landmark. For the first time in 40 years, we completed our work on time. That has not happened in a budget-writing year since 1957. Special sessions have been the rule rather than the exception. This year, for the first time in several generations, taxpayers will not pay the extra staffing and workload costs of a special session.

At the same time, we passed major policy initiatives, including juvenile justice reform, welfare reform and property tax relief.

This letter outlines highlights of the just-completed session. Please take a moment to read through it. I welcome your views on these and any other issues. If you have concerns or views you'd like to share, or if you need help dealing with a state agency, please call or write. I will be happy to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Dave Mastin
State Representative

The 1997 Legislature

What the media said:

"The results of the budget-writing session — the first to conclude on time in 40 years — were generally good."

— Walla Walla Union-Bulletin,
5/6/97

"Communication...was open and clear."

— Tri-City Herald, 5/4/97

"Pragmatism, compromise mark session"

— Spokane Spokesman-Review,
4/28/97

"A legislative session to write home about"

— Seattle Times, 4/29/97

"Bipartisan effort defies predictions of gridlock"

— Tacoma News Tribune, 4/28/97

"Rousing success for Legislature"

— Everett Herald, 4/28/97

Toll-free legislative hotline: 1-800-562-6000

Dave Mastin

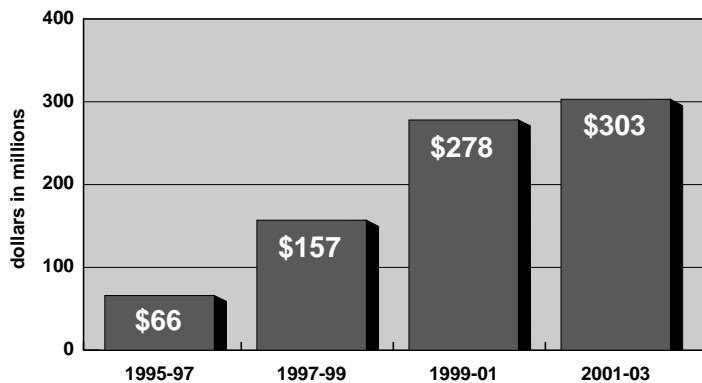
State Representative



Spending less, saving more

Our budget for 1997-99 is \$19.07 billion. The final budget is \$112 million below the Initiative 601 spending limit. Over the next six years, this will save taxpayers \$804 million.

Savings resulting from GOP budgets



Tomorrow's education at today's prices

We know that young people with college degrees have a better chance to find family-wage jobs. But working parents are understandably concerned about the rising costs of higher education. This year, we've instituted a program that allows parents to purchase future college credits at current tuition rates.

Parents can purchase up to four full years of college credit as their child matures, and then apply them toward tuition at any of our state colleges. The credits purchased will not shrink over time. What you pay for today is what you will receive tomorrow. This is an excellent way to provide broad access to education for our young people. The program is still being developed, but it should be up and running before the end of this year.



Capital budget

The 1997-99 capital budget includes funding for the following projects

- **Asotin Creek acquisition** — \$624,633
- **WSU/Tri-Cities branch campus** — Preliminary work for new science center (\$140,000)



Education

Our budget increases education funding by 7.5 percent over the biennium — an increase that stays ahead of enrollment and exceeds the inflation rate (about 2 percent). We increased funding in the following specific areas:

THE BUDGET — PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Total public school spending

'95-'97 \$8.28 billion

'97-'99 \$8.90 billion

Annual per-pupil spending

'97 \$4,561 per student

'98 \$4,635 per student

'99 \$4,729 per student

Specific increases

Teacher salary increase

(3 percent on 7-1-97) — \$297 million

School construction — \$75 million

Technology grants — \$39 million

Instructional materials — \$20 million

(average: \$458 per classroom)

Higher education — enrollment increases

Total new enrollments — 6,390

Universities — 2,190

Community and technical colleges — 4,200

WSU/Tri-Cities branch campus —

90 new enrollment slots

Columbia Basin Community College

— 85 new enrollment slots

Walla Walla Community College —

37 new enrollment slots



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Crime

Our juvenile justice bill, which passed unanimously, enacts the first major overhaul of our juvenile justice system in nearly 20 years.

Here are the highlights:

Accountability — 16- and 17-year-olds will be prosecuted as adults in the following cases: drive-by shooting, first-degree robbery, first-degree child rape, first-degree burglary with a previous conviction, and any crime in which the offender was armed with a firearm. These crimes are added to a list of offenses that already includes murder and rape.

New sentencing system — The bill replaces the current sentencing “point system” with sentencing ranges based on two factors: 1) seriousness of the current offense; and 2) number of prior felony and misdemeanor sentences.

Sentencing alternatives — The measure includes several alternatives to jail or prison time, including boot camps, home detention, community service, and mandatory school attendance.

Parental involvement — Parents of juvenile offenders would be required to participate in court proceedings involving their children.

Community Juvenile Accountability Act — Grants would be made available to local governments to fund community-based juvenile accountability and intervention programs that meet specified criteria. Juveniles with three or more convictions would be referred to community-based intervention programs.



Welfare reform

This year saw the culmination of a four-year struggle to reform welfare. The Legislature passed and the governor signed a bill that replaces our broken welfare system with provisions that emphasize personal responsibility and work. Welfare recipients will abide by the following conditions:

- Time limits on benefits (five years)
- Requirements to work, search for work or perform community service
- Job training and other services
- Eliminates many of the disincentives in the existing system

We believe this program, which we call the Personal Responsibility Act of 1997, will help families to free themselves from the cycle of dependency.



Tax relief – Property taxes

This year, the Legislature approved \$411 million worth of tax cuts. One of our first actions of the session was a vote to prevent an immediate property tax increase in January. We extended a 4.7 percent reduction in the state property tax levy through 1997.

Several other property tax relief measures were passed by the Legislature, but vetoed by the governor. In response, we have placed our proposal on the referendum ballot this fall. The voters will make the final decision on whether to approve \$220 million worth of property tax relief.

Our proposal would make the 4.7 percent state levy reduction permanent. It would limit the property tax “spikes” that result from unexpected assessment increases. Also, it would limit property tax increases at both the state and local level. Currently, governments are allowed to increase property taxes by a maximum of 6 percent each year. Our proposal would limit increases to 6 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower (inflation has been running at about 3 percent.)



Small business tax relief

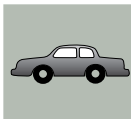
This year, we voted to complete the rollback of a heavy tax increase on small businesses imposed in 1993, during the Lowry administration. The first half of the rollback was passed in 1996 and vetoed by then-Gov. Lowry. The Legislature overrode the veto. We voted for the second half of the rollback this year. The repeal takes effect in July 1998.



Other tax relief

Integrity and a good reputation shouldn't be taxed, but some see this tax on "intangibles" as a new source of revenue. The identification and valuation of intangible personal property presents a host of bureaucratic headaches; who decides how much a reputation is worth?

We prevented this trend with a bill that clearly exempts intangible personal property from taxation. The governor has signed the bill.



Transportation

The following ongoing improvement projects in the 16th District will continue to receive funding in the 1997-99 transportation budget:

- **SR 12** — *Lewis Street interchange* (\$376,672)
- **SR 12** — *13th Avenue/Clarkston* (\$87,315)
- **SR 12** *corridor management plan* (\$42,000)
- **SR 125** — *State line to College Place* (\$768,880)
- **SR 182** — *SR 395 interchange* (\$65,663)
- **SR 395** — *Hillsboro Street intersection* (\$254,272)



Flood relief

In recent years, floods have caused considerable damage to communities throughout the 16th District. During flood emergencies, swift action is sometimes necessary to protect neighborhoods and citizens.

This year, I sponsored a bill that will allow counties to obtain hydraulic permits more quickly in times of emergency. The language was incorporated into a Senate bill that passed the Legislature and received the governor's signature.

This is good news for flood-threatened communities. Now these areas will be able to take the appropriate steps to prevent disaster when danger to the lives and property of citizens is imminent.

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Olympia, WA 98504-0600
PO Box 40600
404 Legislative Building

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